

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator John Kerry (D-Mass.) and Representative Mike Quigley (IL-05) today applauded the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for outlining concrete steps towards ending the outdated, discriminatory lifetime ban on gay and bisexual men from donating blood.

In a question and answer document requested by Senator Kerry and Congressman Quigley, HHS laid out four final areas for additional study needed to implement a policy change and identified funding in two of the four areas.

“We’ve been working on this a long time in a serious way and I’m glad Secretary Sebelius responded with concrete steps to finally remove this policy from the books,” said Senator Kerry.

“HHS is doing their due-diligence and we plan to stay focused on the end game – a safe blood supply and an end to this discriminatory ban.”

“This announcement by HHS means we’re moving in the direction of finally ending this antiquated and discriminatory policy,” said Quigley. “Senator Kerry and I will continue to push for a behavior-based screening process both in the name of fairness and a safer blood supply.”

“When these studies are complete, the Department is committed to a full evidence-based evaluation of the policy,” HHS wrote in the Q&A.

Last summer, the HHS Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) met to review the donor deferral policy and concluded that the current ban on gay and bi-sexual men is “suboptimal” due to the fact that it allows high-risk individuals to donate blood while prohibiting low-risk donors from contributing, even during blood shortages.

The four final areas of study laid out by HHS are included below and to read the full report click [here](#)

- how the risk of blood transmissible diseases in the current donor population relate to risk factors in donors;
- the root cause of Quarantine Release Errors (QRE), the accidental release of blood not cleared for use;
- if potential donors correctly understand the current questionnaire and if men who have sex with men (MSM) would comply with modified deferral criteria; AND
- if alternative screening strategy (e.g. pre- and/or post qualifying donation infectious disease testing) for MSM (and potentially other high-risk donors) would assure blood safety while enabling collection of data that could demonstrate safe blood collection from a subset of MSM or other currently deferred donors.

Senator Kerry has been a longtime advocate for updating this discriminatory policy. Last year, he wrote [two separate letters](#) to the FDA [urging them to abolish the policy](#) along with an [op-ed](#) in the ban in Bay Windows, New England's largest LGBT newspaper.

Congressman Quigley spear-headed an [op-ed](#) co-authored by seven House Democrats urging HHS to revise its blood donation policy. Quigley and Kerry also wrote also a [bi-cameral](#) letter to HHS calling for an end to the ban and submitted [testimony](#) to HHS for a two-day hearing reviewing the policy.

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